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**GOVERNMENT SPACE NEEDS STUDY CURRITUCK** COUNTY

## CURRITUCK COUNTY

### GOVERNMENT SPACE NEEDS STUDY

1978

### Prepared for

### CURRITUCK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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# GOVERNMENT SPACE NEEDS STUDY CURRITUCK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

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The preparation of this report was financed in part through a planning grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

### I. Introduction

The primary purpose of the Government Space Needs Study is to determine the adequacy of existing government office and courthouse facilities to meet the present and future needs of Currituck County citizens. The study is also intended to give recommendations for consideration by the Currituck County Board of Commissioners on alternatives for resolving any problems that might be uncovered during the study process.

To determine the adequacy of facilities for both present and future needs, interviews were held with the department head of each of the following departments:

Clerk of Court
Magistrate
Social Services
Health and Mental Health
Jail
Register of Deeds
Finance and Taxation
Planning and Code Enforcement
Extension Service
Soil Conservation Service
Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service
School
Library

In addition to interviews with staff of the Clerk of Court and Magistrate's office, "100 Courthouses: A Report on North Carolina Judicial Facilities" was used to evaluate the judicial needs in Currituck County and the affect these needs will have on overall County space needs.

### II. Existing Population

Before any planning for community facilities can take place, the current and projected population for the County must be examined.

As shown on Graph 1, the County's population has increased and decreased sporadically since 1900. The net increase in population since 1900 has been 447 people. However, the Graph shows the Currituck County CAMA Land Use Plan projected population in 1975 of 9,500 people, based on a staff count of housing units in the county in 1975 multiplied by 3.5 persons per household.

Table 2 reflects the distribution of the 1970 population by townships. Popular Branch and Crawford Townships each had 35.7% of the population, which is 2,487 people in each area. As illustrated on the map, both of these townships are located along the major thoroughfare on which many residential units are concentrated.

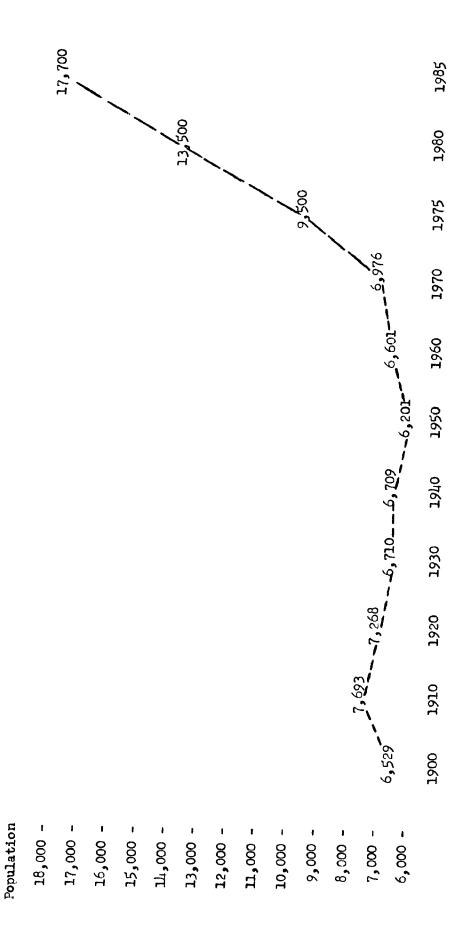
As illustrated by Table 3, the County has been losing people in the 25-49 age group while at the same time increasing in number the 50-65 and over age group. The loss of the 25-49 year old age group may be due to the lack of job opportunities in the County, while the 50 and over group find the area attractive for retirement.

The 1980 population projection shown in Graph 1 calls for 13,500 people, increasing to 17,700 people by 1985. From 1975 to 1985, the population is projected to practically double. The CAMA

Land Use Plan indicates the primary reason for this large increase to be the spill-over effect Tidewater Virginia is beginning to have on the County. If this trend continues, Moyock Township can expect an increase in the share of the total population over than shown on Table 2.

As the population grows, citizens will require additional services and facilities simply from the standpoint of a larger number of citizens to be served.

# Population and Population Projection



**\** 

Table 2 1970 Population by Township

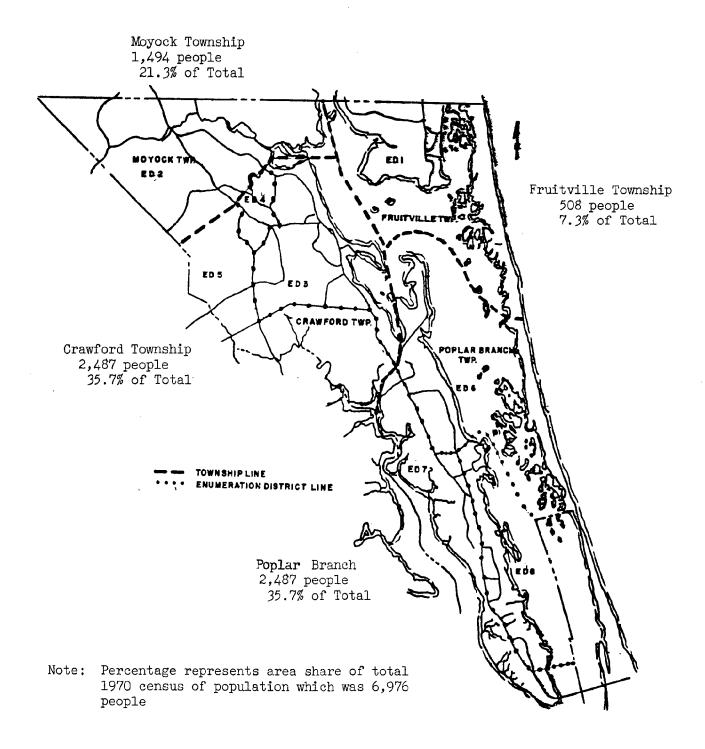


Table 3 Currituck County Age Distribution

Age	1950	1960	1970
0-14	1781 (28.7%)	2071 (31.4%)	1,951 (28.0%)
15-24	959 (15.5%)	831 (12.6%)	1,075 (15.4%)
25-34	797 (12.9%)	776 (11.7%)	732 (10.5%)
35-49	1168 (18.8%)	1204 (18.2%)	1,154 (16.5%)
50-64	911 (14.7%)	1050 (16.0%)	1,239 (17.8%)
65+	585 (9.4%)	699 (10.1%)	825 (11.8%)
TOTAL	6,201 (100%)	6,601 (100%)	6,976 (100%)

Source: 1970 Census

### III. Population Trends

Section II of this report notes that the County is beginning to experience a dramatic increase in population since the 1970 census.

Based on the field survey of housing conducted by County staff members in 1975, over 26% of the housing stock is mobile homes. Many of the units are being utilized by service families who are unable to find lots in the Tidewater Virginia area because of restrictive zoning ordinances against mobile homes. In many other cases, these mobile units are being occupied by young families with children, or by retirees. In both instances, these families will place additional demands on facilities such as schools, and on medical and social services.

### IV. Survey of Existing County Buildings

### A. History

The present Currituck County Courthouse was built in three stages, beginning with a small pre-1869 two-story brick core. This section includes the portion of the Courthouse presently used for the following, as shown on the Existing County Facilities Plan:

Magistrate's Office Clerk of Court Register of Deeds Court Room ASCS Office

The only visible remaining portions of the original Courthouse are the thick brick walls and lower granite foundation. In 1897, a second story was added to the wings and a rear addition constructed. This addition presently houses the following offices:

County Manager
Social Services
Jury Room
Agricultural Extension
Soil and Water Conservation
ASCS Office

In 1952, a Neo-Colonial addition was added to the west side of the 1897 rear addition. This space is presently being used by the following departments:

Finance Office Tax Office Sheriff Jail

In addition to the Courthouse, the County is utilizing a small frame structure adjacent to the jailer's residence. This structure, which is referred to as the Courthouse Annex on the

Existing County Facilities Plan, houses the following offices:

Forestry Service
Food Stamps
Planning and Permits
Drivers License Sxaminer

The County Health Department operates from a 1,700 square foot structure located on U. S. Highway 34, approximately one-half mile west of the County Courthouse complex.

The County Mental Health Department is located in a 12  $\times$  50 foot mobile unit parked to the rear of the Health Center.

### V. Evaluation of Existing Space for County Offices

### A. Register of Deeds Office

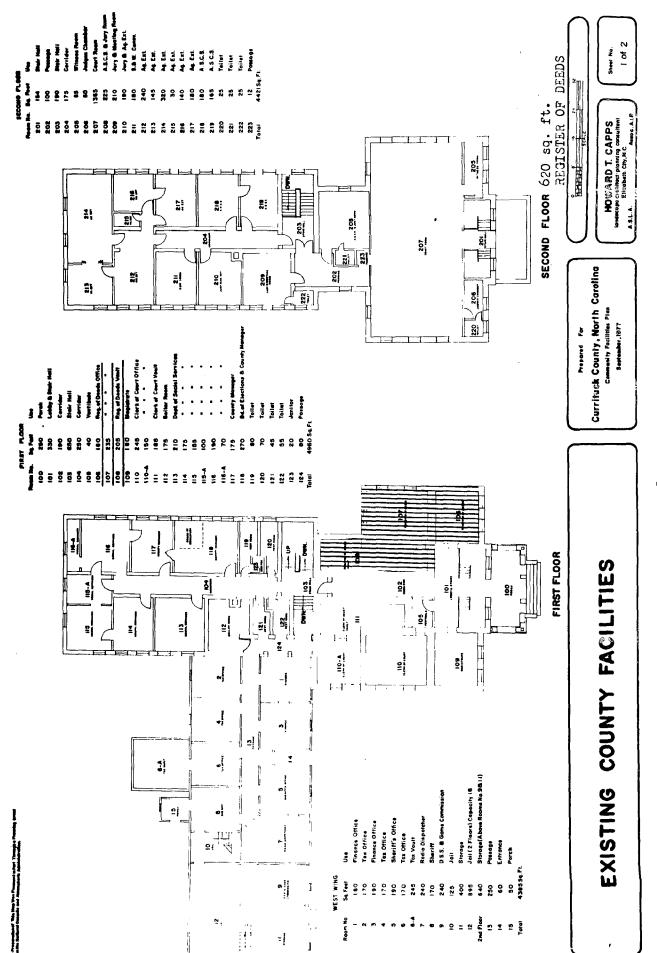
The Register of Deeds Office consists of two rooms and one vault for a total of 620 square feet. (See Existing County Facilities Plan)

The front office consists of 180 square feet and is used as the work area for the Register of Deeds and her assistant, which allows approximately 90 square feet of working space per person.

The second room is being utilized for the storage of records and equipment.

The vault, which contains approximately 205 square feet, is a long, narrow room which becomes very crowded when being utilized by more than two attorneys or citizens using deed books. Although the space is currently cramped, the Register of Deeds indicated that the space should be adequate when the reduction in the size of deed books is completed and when an additional work table can be placed in the vault.

This facility should be adequate during the planning period.

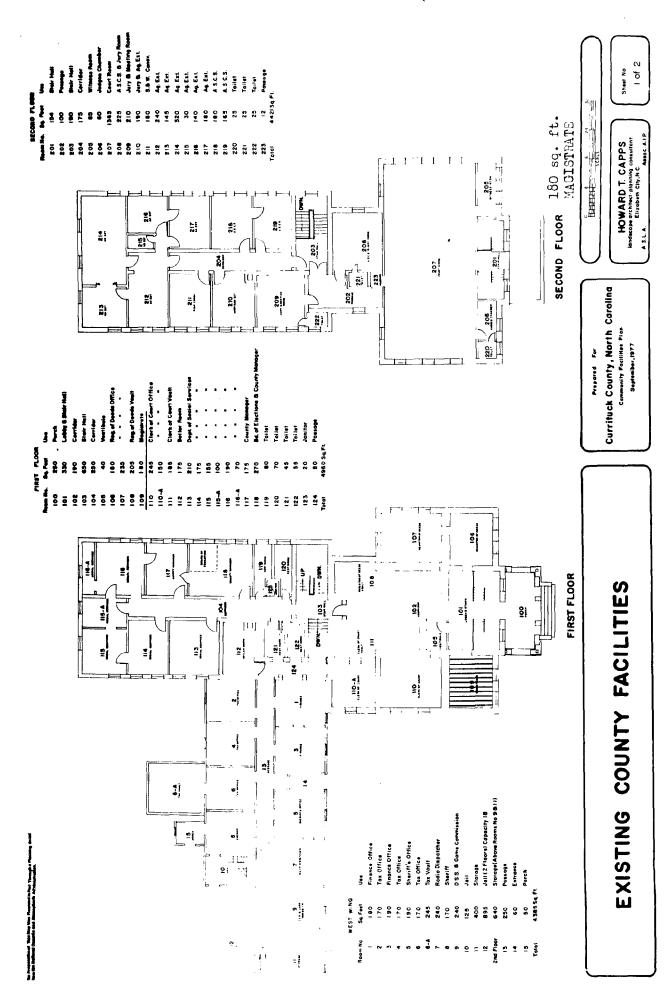


### B. Magistrate's Office

The Magistrate's Office consists of one room of 180 square feet. The space is used by the Magistrate for bond hearings, small claims court, wedding ceremonies, etc. This space is also utilized by the three highway patrolmen serving the County to store confiscated property and records, and to administer the Breathalyzer test to suspected drunken drivers.

On holidays and weekends, this space becomes inadequate because of the increased number of drunken drivers being processed.

It appears that because of the need to store equipment and records in this space, and the fact that an additional person also must work in this area on a part-time basis, an additional room approximately 10 x 10 feet could be utilized by this department.



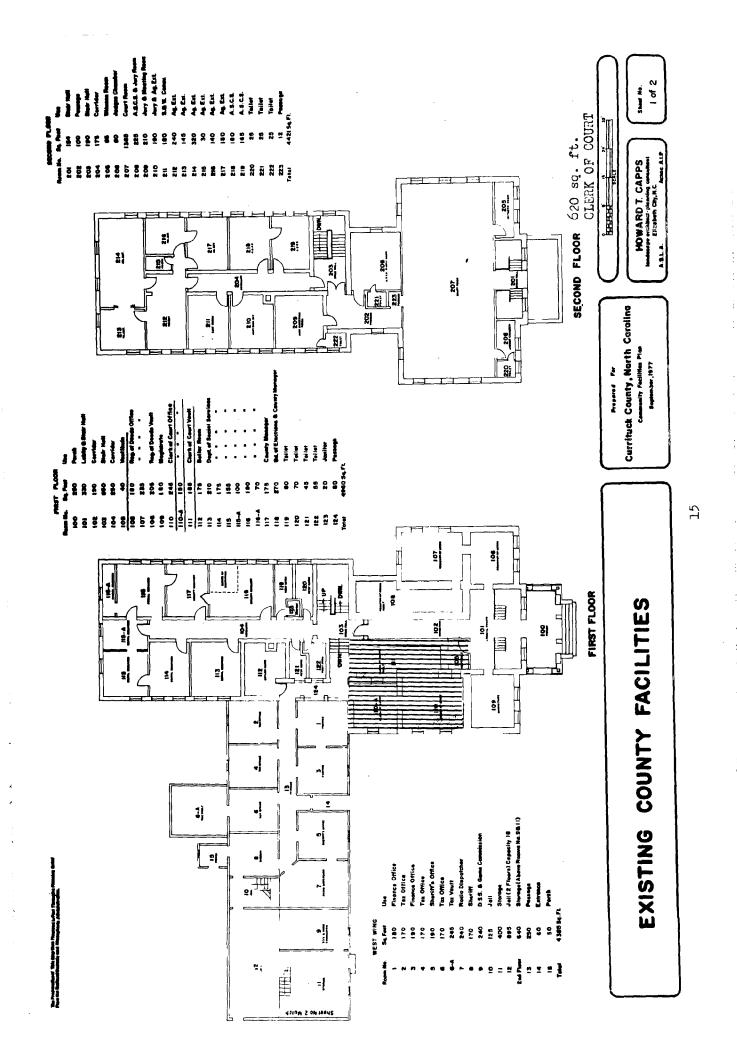
### C. Clerk of Court

The Clerk of Court's Office is located on the first floor level of the original courthouse. Two work spaces of 245 square feet and 150 square feet make up the working area. The vault area has approximately 185 square feet and is used primarily for the storage of records. A vestibule of 40 square feet is used as the entrance, for a total of approximately 620 square feet, of which 395 square feet is adequately lighted office space.

The present staff consists of the Clerk of Court and two assistants, with a current need for another staff member. With existing staff, each worker has approximately 132 square feet of working space; but with the addition of one staff member, that figure would be reduced to 98 square feet per person.

Mrs. Elliott indicated that because her work is confidential in nature, a private office is needed by her or anyone else in her position.

She also feels that because of the rotating court schedule presently in effect, and the fact that the State Legislature is considering a position for a third judge in the County, their work load will continue to increase. For example, in 1977 the Clerk's Office handled 2,390 cases all year. During the first mine months of this year the office has handled the same number of cases.

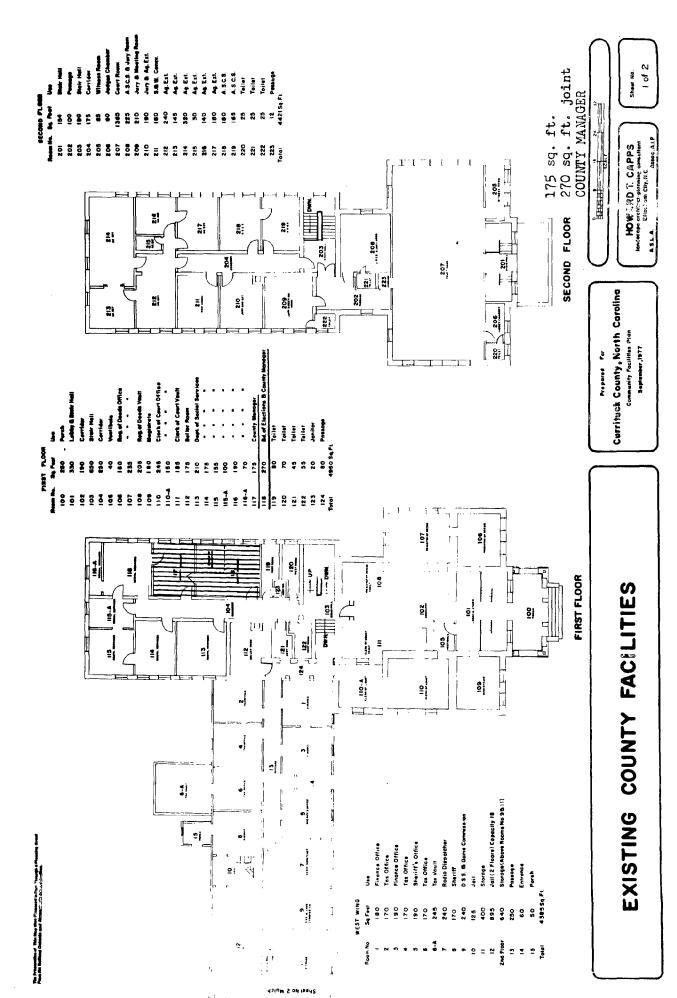


### D. County Manager

The County Manager's Office has two spaces with a total of approximately 445 square feet.

Mr. Bradley's office is 175 square feet, with the remaining 270 square feet divided between his secretary and the Board of Elections area.

This working space will be adequate during the planning period.



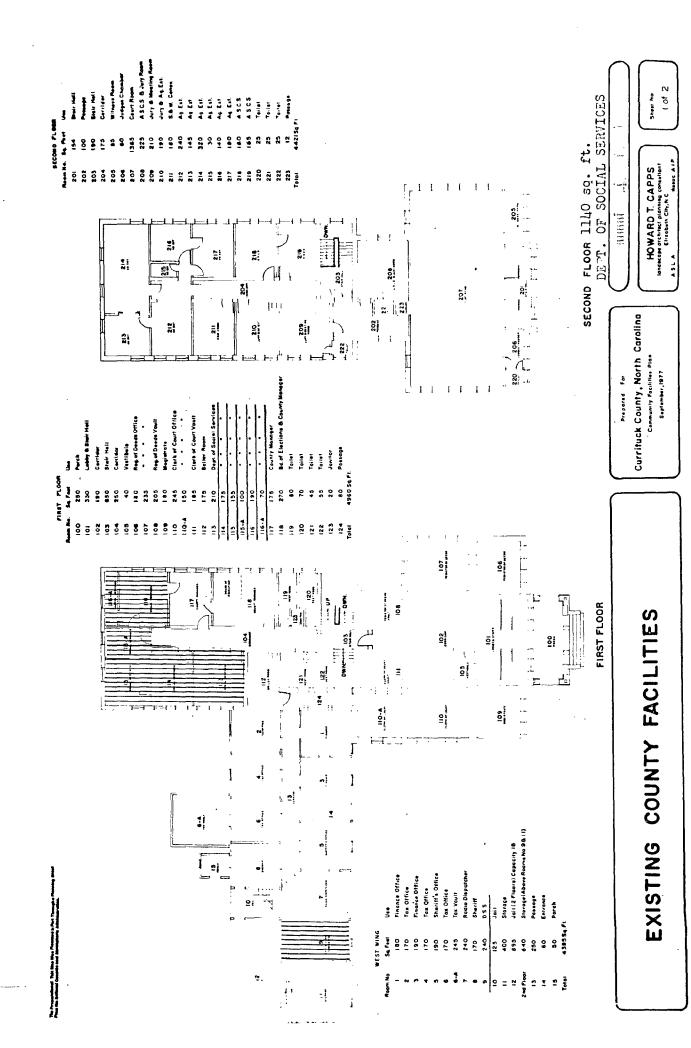
### E. Social Services

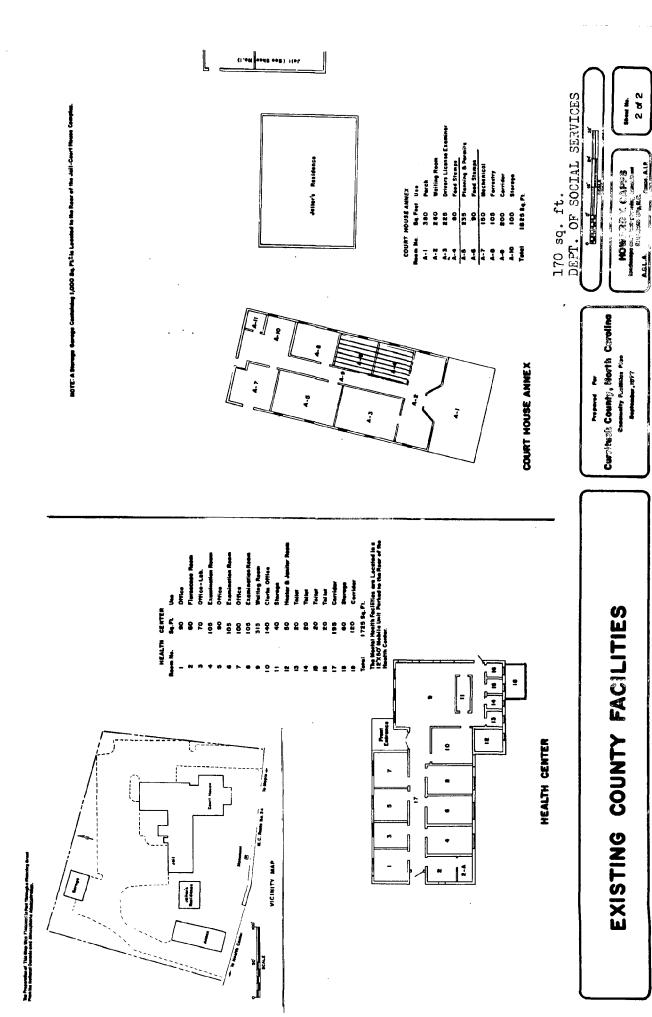
The Social Services Department is located in three different areas of the courthouse complex.

Five rooms, making up approximately 900 square feet of the total 1,310 square feet used by this department, are located at the rear of the courthouse building. One social worker is presently working in the old jail, with approximately 240 square feet. The Food Stamp Program staff members now occupy approximately 170 square feet in two offices located in the annex building.

Mrs. Edge indicated that each social worker needed a private office because of the confidential nature of their work. At the present time, her primary concern is the fact that her staff is not in one location. Another need mentioned is conference room space for staff meetings or meetings with visitors to her department, and a larger reception area which could also be used for clerical help.

At present, her department has two clerical workers, with a possible need for one more within five years. The department has four eligibility workers and two service workers, with a current need for two additional service workers. If three additional workers were added during the next five years, plus a reception area and small conference room, this department would require approximately 500 additional square feet.



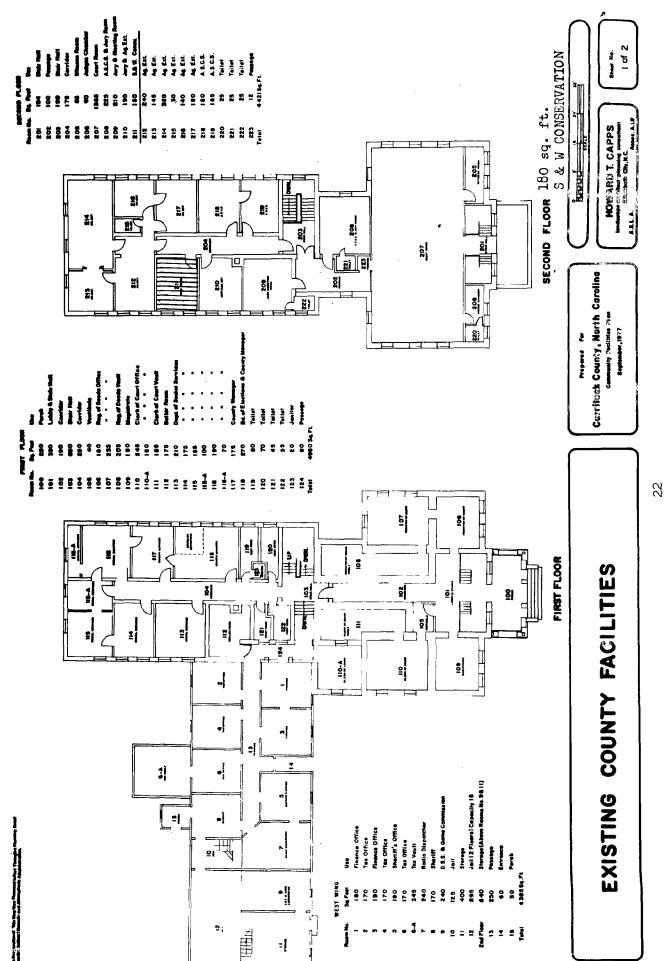


### F. Soil and Water Conservation

This office consists of one room of approximately 180 square feet, with the Soil and Water Conservationist and secretary working in the same room, which creates a very crowded condition.

Another problem mentioned was the lack of storage space for aerial photographs, soil surveys, etc.

There is a present need for at least one additional office space of 100 square feet, with the potential need of even more room as the County grows in population.



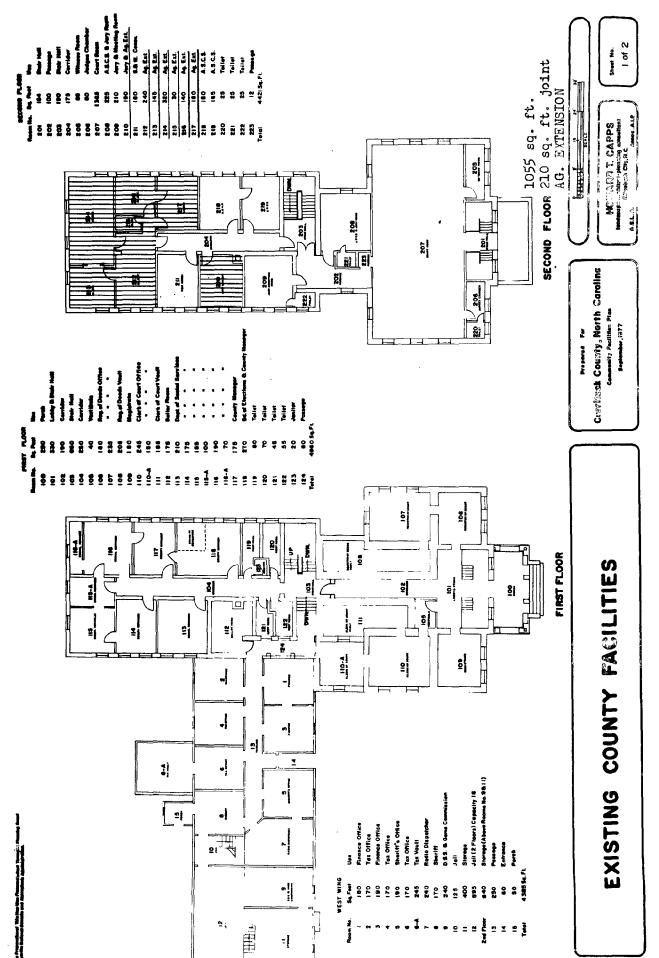
### 3. Agricultural Extension Service

At the present time, this office has ten staff members and the Chairman. An additional new staff member will be serving a three-county area from the Currituck County Office.

The office space consists of four offices and one kitchen. Three aids use the jury room as office space unless the grand jury is meeting in Currituck County, which normally occurs approximately three or four times per year. Two staff members are presently using the kitchen for office space.

Mr. Hardesty indicated a need for additional storage space and renovation of the kitchen. In addition, he indicated that having staff members using the kitchen as an office made it difficult to put on demonstrations or cooking classes, etc.

roviding office space for four staff members plus the special extension agent would require approximately 500 additional square feet of space.



### H. Court Facilities

The Superior Court room and ancillary space utilizes the largest percentage of space in the Courthouse. As shown in Table 1, 2,420 square feet of the total 6,440 square feet of usable floor space is presently being used for judicial purposes, which represents 37.5% of all available floor space. Note: 6,440 square feet represents floor area in two-story portion of Courthouse.

Table 1						
Space Number*	<u>Facility</u>	Estimated Square Footage				
207	Court Room	1,365				
105, 110, 110-A, 111	Clerk of Court	520				
109	Magistrate	180				
206	Judge's Chamber	60				
205	Witness Room	85				
209	Jury Room	210				
Total Estimated Space	2,420					
Total Usable Space in To	wo-Story Portion of Courthous	se 6,440				
*See Existing County Facilities Plan						

Based on the report, "100 Courthouses: A deport on North Carolina Judicial Facilities," which was prepared by the School of Design, North Carolina State University, for the Administrative Office of the Courts, State of North Carolina, there will be a need for an additional 4,258 square feet devoted to judicial functions by 1985. The study further recommends that this space

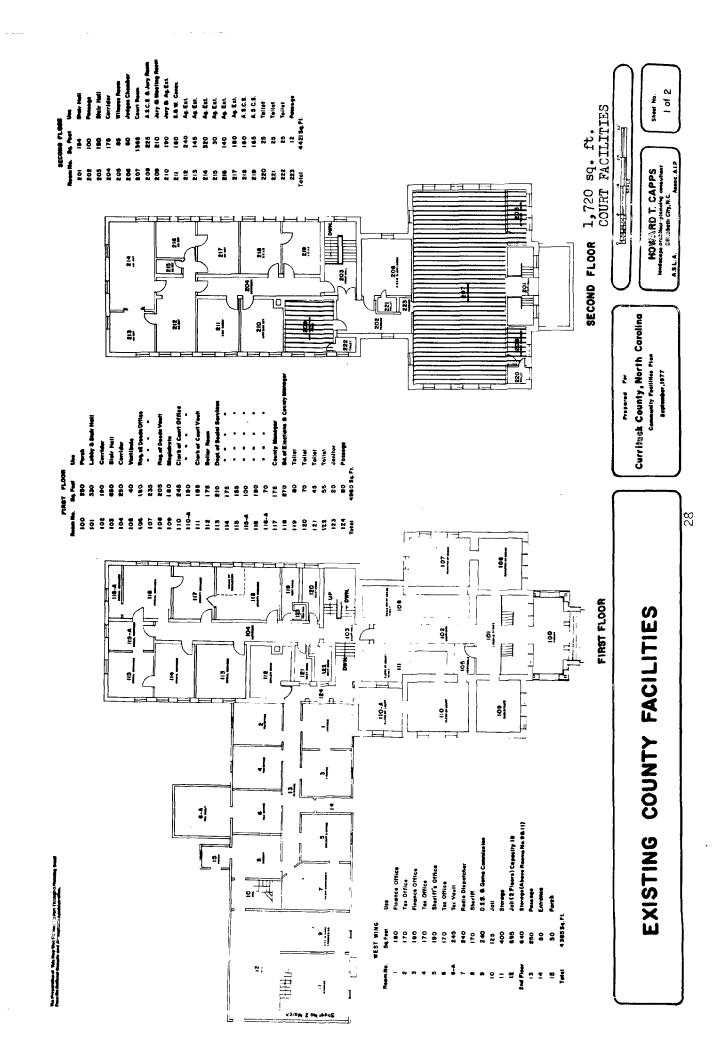
can be provided within the existing Courthouse by relocating selected non-judicial functions to another facility. As can be seen in Table 1, to accommodate 4,258 square feet of additional judicial uses would utilize all the remaining space within the two-story portion of the Courthouse, therefore requiring additional space for County administrative functions and service functions. If this approach is taken, the study referred to above further suggests the following facilities be provided:

- 1. Renovation of 4,258 additional square feet at an estimated cost of \$43,000.00.
- 2. Provide office for District Attorney, Juvenile Councelor and Probation Officer.
- 3. Upgrade existing Courthouse facilities at an estimated cost of \$252,000.00.
- 4. Provide central air-conditioning for offices and work spaces at an estimated cost of \$110,000.00.
  - 5. Install wall insulation.
  - 6. Waterproof foundation walls.
- 7. From recovered space that had been used for other purposes, provide waiting area for public, one attorney conference room of 100 square feet, jury pool room of 700 square feet, jury deliberation room convenient to courtroom of 330 square feet.
- 8. Improvements needed to meet handicapped accessibility requirements:

Accessible public elevator \$28,000 Enclose and renovate existing stairs 6,300 Wheelchair space in courtroom

The study further recommends that by the year 2000, an additional 4,211 square feet will be needed for judicial activities. As shown on the Existing County Facilities Flan, this additional space requirement would necessitate the relocation of all County administrative functions from the west wing of the Courthouse. This would provide approximately 4,025 square feet of the needed 4,211.

The County is now on a rotating court schedule, which means that court is being held each week. This is presently a temporary situation, but with the Legislature considering a third judge for the County, weekly sessions of court would become the normal schedule. This increase in court sessions will bring additional people to the courthouse complex on a regular basis, which will put an additional burden on a parking area already inadequate when court is being held.

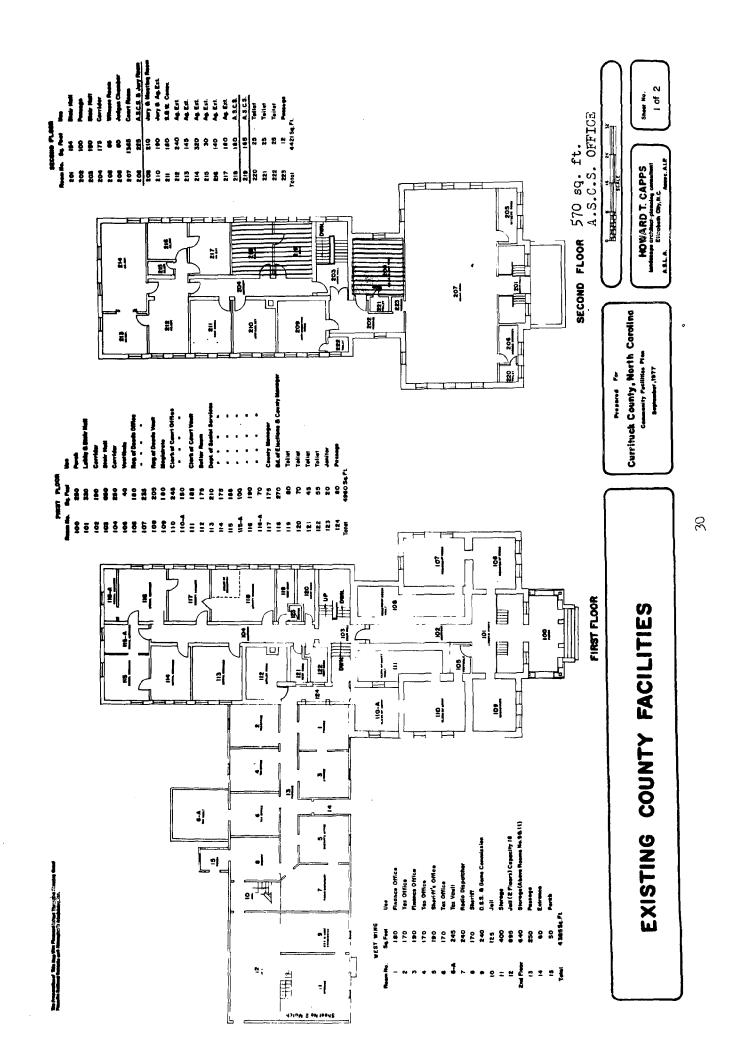


### I. A.S.C.S. Office

The A. S. C. S. Office presently has two office spaces located on the second floor of the courthouse, with a total of 345 square feet. With two full-time staff members, plus the County Executive Director, each staff member has approximately 115 square feet of working space.

Mrs. Morris, the County Executive Officer, indicated that she now shares a 180 square foot office space with another member of the staff, when she needs a private office. This would open up the space she is now in for one person plus additional storage space and space for photographic equipment, which is now kept in the jury room.

This department needs a minimum of 100 square feet of additional space.

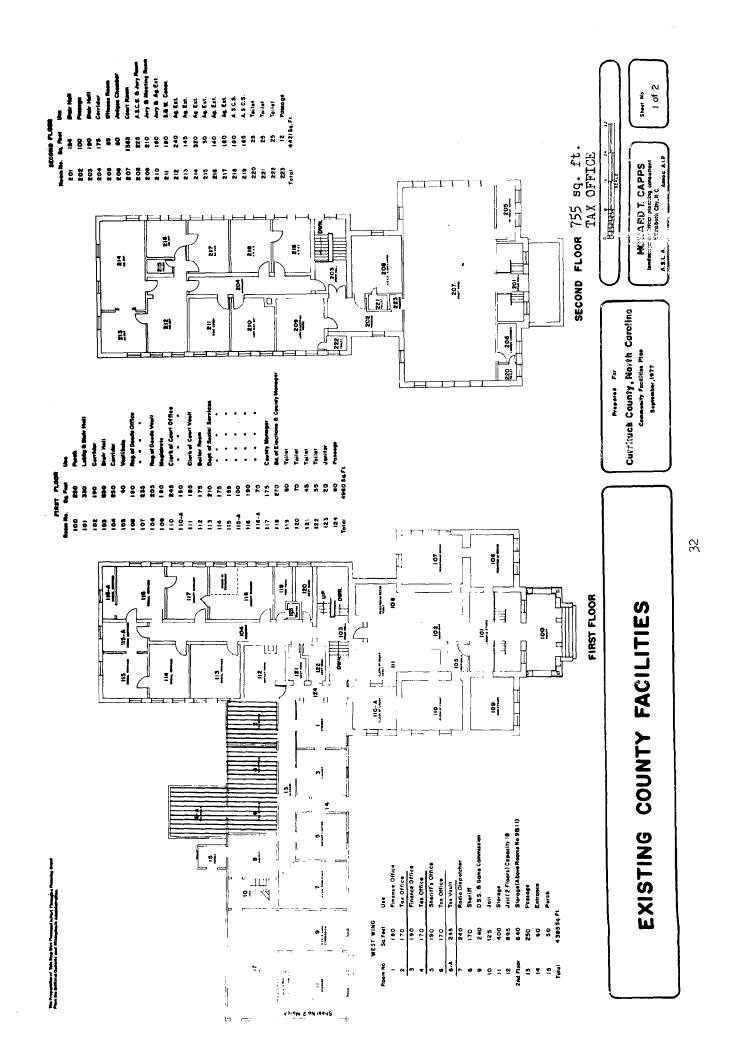


### J. Tax Office

The Tax Office presently has three full-time employees and two part-time employees. The office contains three rooms with a total of approximately 170 square feet per room. The vault contains approximately 245 square feet.

Mr. Dozier indicated that a need exists for additional room to conduct interviews for tax listing.

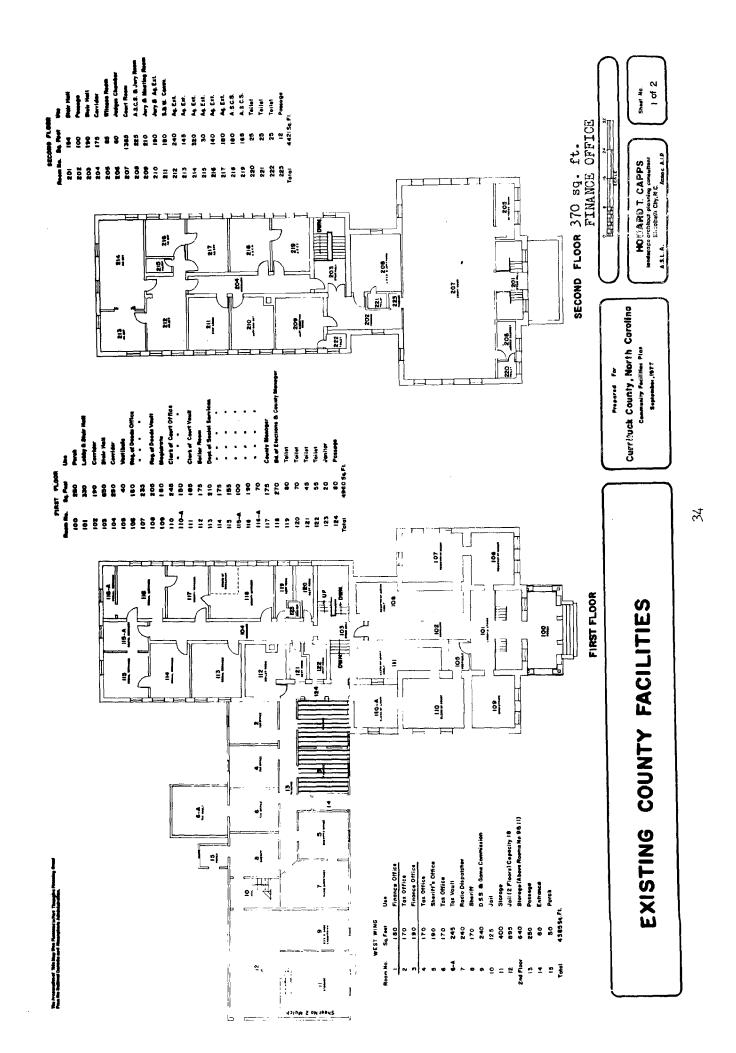
Although there is an apparent need for additional space, compared to many of the offices in the building, this office presently has adequate space except when taxpayers come in to list their taxes.



### K. Finance Office

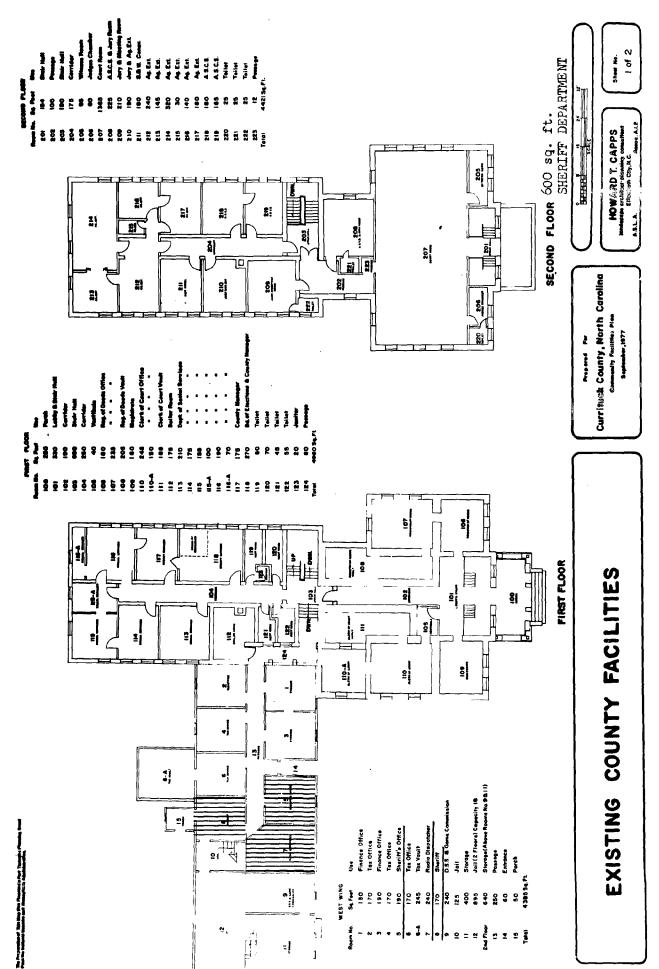
The Finance Office consists of two rooms with a total of 370 square feet. With two full-time staff members, this office has adequate working space and should be adequate during the planning period.

However, the County Manager indicated that in the near future the County may begin keeping county books, payroll and other items on computer. In the event a computer is purchased for the Finance Department, an additional 150 square feet of space would be needed to provide adequate storage and working space in the computer area.



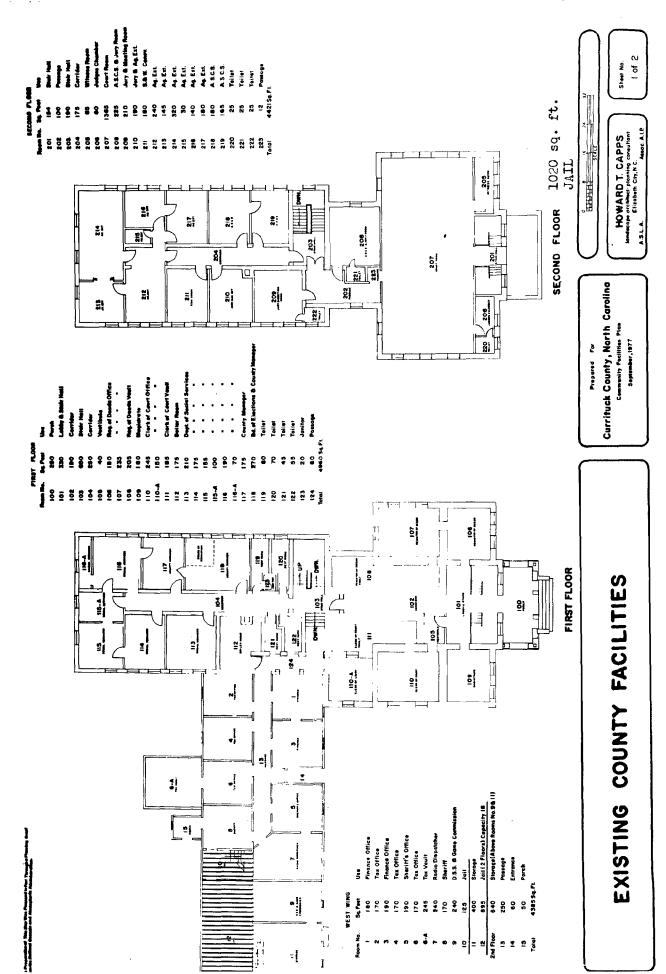
## L. Sheriff's Office

The Sheriff's Office is made up of three rooms with a total of approximately 600 square feet. The Sheriff's private office contains approximately 190 square feet and should be adequate during the planning period. The radio dispatcher's office contains approximately 240 square feet, which should also be adequate during the planning period.



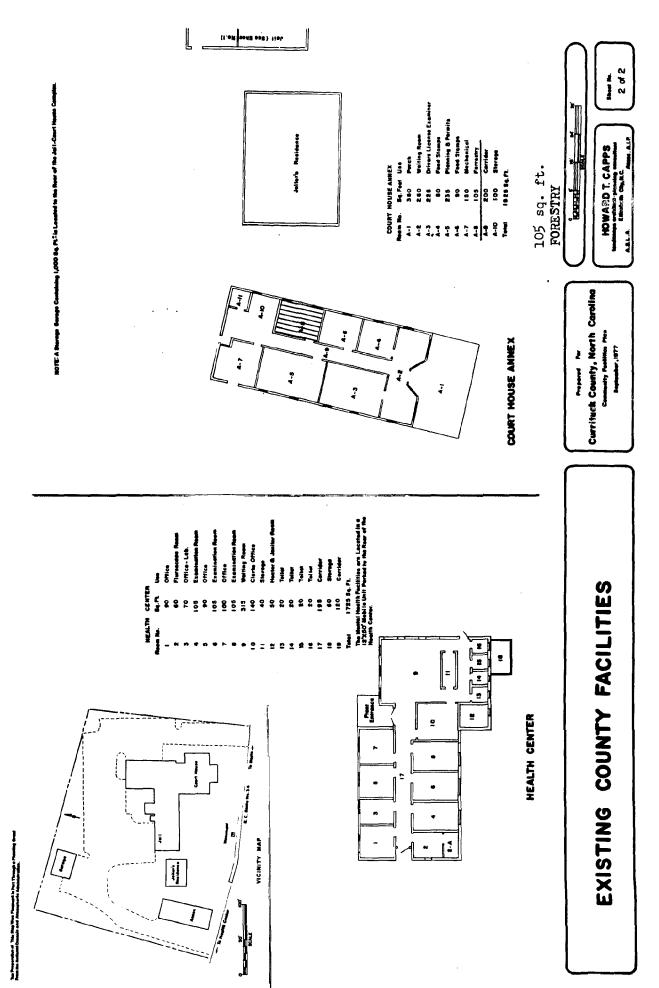
## M. Jail

The jail is located in the 1954 addition to the County Courthouse. The jail has a design capacity of 18 people with a total of approximately 1,020 square feet. Based on information from Sheriff Newbern, this facility should be adequate to serve the County during the next ten years under existing state laws.



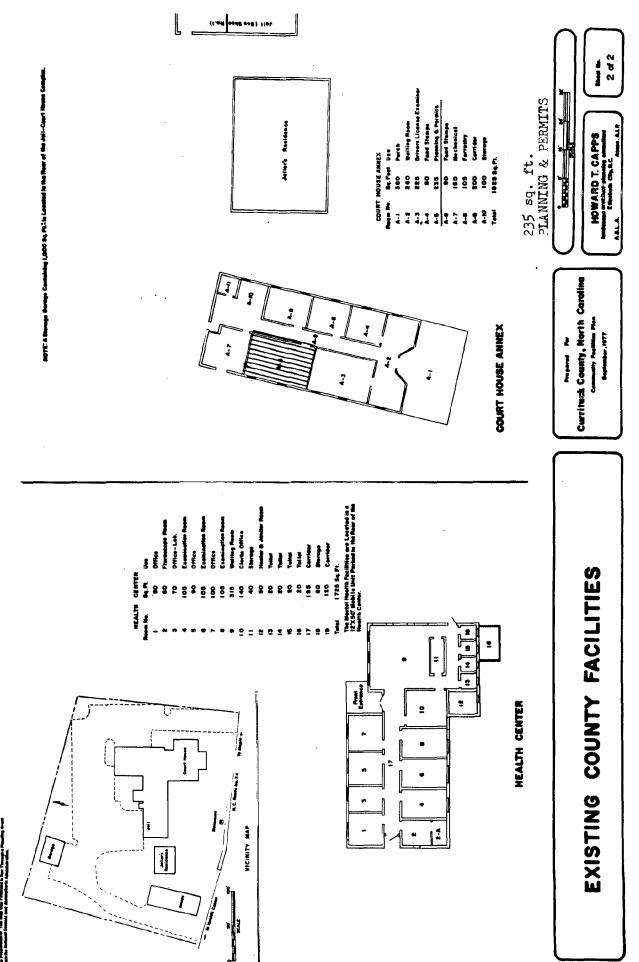
# N. Forestry Service

The Forestry service occupies one room with approximately 105 square feet. This space is adequate for one person, but would be inadequate for more than one person.



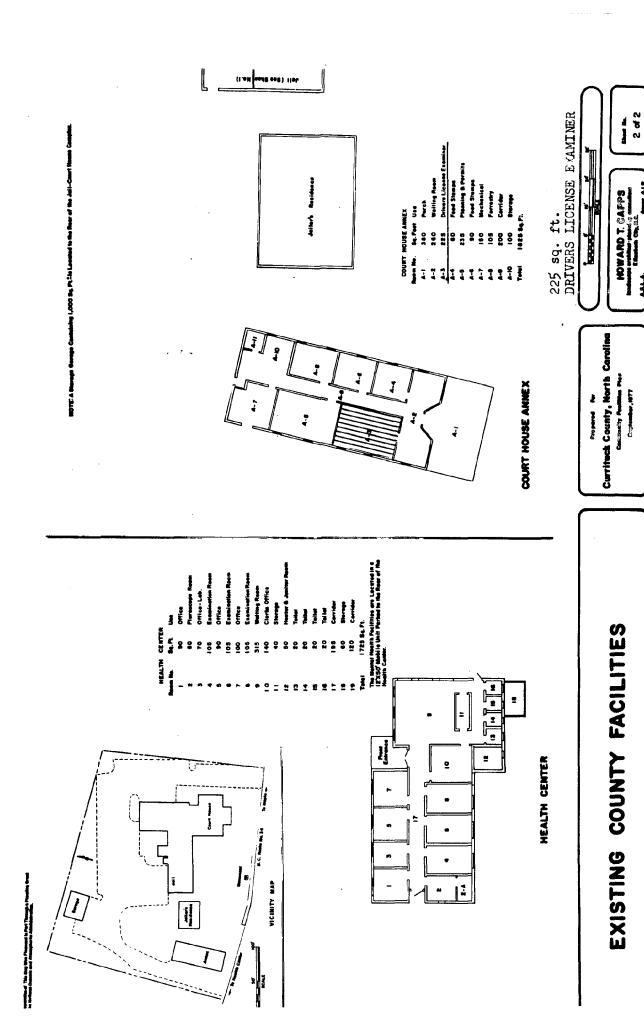
## O. Planning and Permits

This office contains approximately 235 square feet, which is adequate space at the present time. However, as the County grows and additional subdivisions are platted, the need for storage space and for map files, etc., will increasingly cause this space to become less adequate.



# P. Drivers License Examiner

Approximately 235 square feet presently being used by the Drivers License Examiner will be adequate space during the planning period.



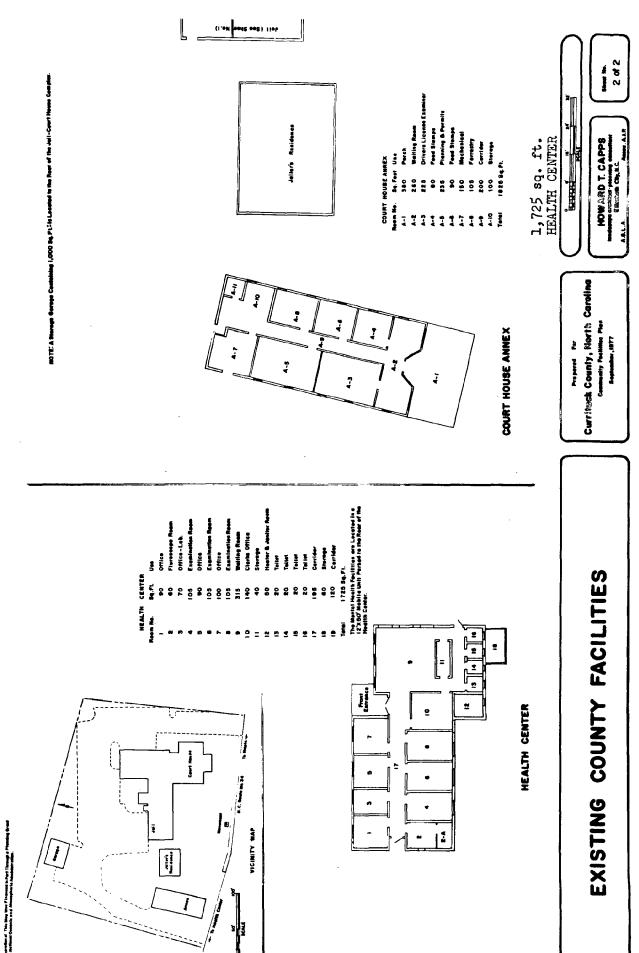
### Q. <u>Health Center</u>

The Health Center, which is located on N. C. Highway 34, contains approximately 1,725 square feet and includes two examination rooms, four offices, waiting room and reception-clerical space.

Dr. Sledge indicated that the two County Sanitarians are presently using a room with 90 square feet, which is inadequate when visitors come to talk with one of the sanitarians. With only 45 square feet per man, this is the most over-crowded condition in any of the county facilities.

Dr. Sledge indicated that they presently need an additional examination room with dressing room space, a separate lab space and individual rooms for testing of hearing and vision.

There is a present need for an additional 500 to 600 square feet of space. This space requirement could increase dramatically in the future in direct relationship to the population increase in the County and the need for local medical attention.



#### VI. Adequacy of Existing County Facilities

Based on the evaluation of current non-judicial space in the Courthouse, there currently is a need for approximately 1,350 square feet of additional space for current County offices.

Table 2 below reflects current or projected needs through 1985 for non-judicial space based on interviews with department heads and as discussed in an earlier section of this report.

	Table 2	
Office	Current Square Feet in Use	Estimated Current Need Through 1985 in Square Feet
Agricultural Extension	1,265	500
A. S. C. S.	570	100
Finance	251	150
Social Services	1,310	500
Soil and Water Conserva	ation 180	100
		1,350

Judicial needs through 1985 would require approximately 4,258 square feet. The judicial facilities study recommended that this space be recovered from the existing Courthouse by relocating non-judicial functions. If this approach is taken, it would require the relocation of all non-judicial functions from the two-story section of the Courthouse and would require finding space for the relocated offices in the amount of 4,020 square feet currently in use plus the 1,350 square feet needed because of current or projected inadequate space. This would require a

structure of approximately 6,000 square feet, including ancillary space such as corridors, toilets, boiler room and storage.

The Health Center is also suffering from over-crowded conditions, and this can be expected to continue as the County grows and there is more demand for these services. It has been recommended earlier that a Federal surplus mobile unit be provided to eliminate current space problems.

In both the case of the Courthouse facilities and the Health Center, the staff members have adjusted to the crowded conditions and could probably make do for some time to come. However, additional space would provide a more pleasant working environment and would probably increase efficiency.

#### VII. Recommendations

With the current and projected needs of both judicial and non-judicial office space, it is apparent that the most desirable thing to do is to provide the needed space. However, with today's attitudes on public spending, and the County's recent need to increase property taxes to maintain current levels of service to County citizens, it is not the best time to be confronted with the need to expand County facilities. Nevertheless, the need is apparent; and thought must be given to how to resolve the problem.

The first possibility would be to commission an architect to study the existing office spaces to see if, by moving departments around, the County could better utilize existing space. He could also determine the feasibility of expanding the Courthouse, keeping in mind the fact that the structure is included in the National Register of Historic Places and care should be taken not to disturb the visual character of the building.

Because of the large demand for additional judicial space, the second alternative may be to utilize the existing Courthouse complex for judicial purposes only, and provide new County administration and service facilities in a new building located either on a new centrally-located site away from the Courthouse complex or on the agricultural land behind the existing Courthouse.

Whatever approach is taken, there is a need to begin looking at the problem in much more detail than we were able to do in this study. Hopefully, this study, in addition to the judicial facilities

study prepared by the School of Design, will bring many of the deficiencies to light. During the next year, 1978-79, it is recommended that the County do the following:

- 1. Conduct a survey of County department heads to determine if separation of judicial and County administrative and service functions would adversly affect their offices.
- 2. Determine if Federal or State grants are available for the expansion of the judicial facilities.
- 3. Investigate possibility of purchasing agricultural land to the rear of existing complex.
- 4. Look for centrally-located sites that could be used for administrative and service functions, such as the airstrip site, if a separate site is going to be considered.
- 5. Commission architect to do detail study of feasibility of expanding on same site with the purchase of land to the rear of the Courthouse.
- 6. Have architect determine cost of building new facilities to meet current needs and future growth needs (50 years).

COASTAL ZONE INFORMATION

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